

February 17, 2009

To the Members of the Environment Committee:

I am testifying in favor of the Proposed H.B. 5272, an act creating a relief fund for Connecticut dairy farmers and Proposed H.B. 5483, an act concerning financial relief for the dairy industry.

Thirteen years ago I sat in a seat like this one, to urge *those* representatives not to cut funding for the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. At the age of 12 I proved to be a very persuasive speaker. I am back today with another request of you.

There is a serious crisis in this country that is impacting my family, and our neighbors on either side of our farm- and all the other hardworking dairy farming families in this State. As in the testimonies already presented and those you have yet to hear, the costs of producing local, safe, and healthy milk are far exceeding the prices these farmers receive.

The obstacles to remaining a successful dairyman or woman in Connecticut are plenty. This is a job that does not close the office or store for Christmas, and really is open 365 days/year. These farmers are on call 24 hours/day, with crops and feedstock that are dependent on weather, which is never predictable- even when using the Farmer's Almanac. Property values are higher here than in any other state, and above all, it is a pretty dirty job.

But here today, these men and women, who have beat all odds, who have run extremely tight ships to stay in business, who have maintained their family farms for generations; they are here because they have chosen this job, and this job is a lifestyle. Even on the days that they're spending more time in the brown stuff than the good stuff, they're serving their community and the residents of Connecticut with creamy, wholesome, vitamin rich milk found in the back of any grocery or convenience store. It is the most basic ingredient essential for every bowl of cereal, cup of coffee, and freshly baked chocolate chip cookies.

How I wish that we did not have to have this hearing this morning, that these farmers could instead be doing what they do best. But we are here, from all corners of the State, asking that you explore any and all options that could keep these farmers in charge of caring for our land and filling our glasses with the really good stuff. Today I will go home to my family's dairy farm, prouder than ever that my dad and uncle and mom wake up each day, with the simplest of missions, to grow and produce food.

Sincerely,



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